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DE RUEHRH #1049 2241455
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 121455Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1377
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS RIYADH 001049

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP (BERNDT)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: SAUDI H1N1 UPDATE: IRAN CANCELS RAMADAN FLIGHTS, 9
DEATHS, HAJJ PREP CONTINUES

¶1. (SBU) Iran cancelled all flights to Saudi Arabia during Ramadan on August 10 reportedly to minimize the spread of H1N1. The Chairman of the National Hajj Committee Saad al-Qarashi said the Iranian decision would minimally impact Ramadan Umrah season, as Iranians usually come for Umrah during other months. Although several countries have issued warnings on travel to Saudi Arabia for Umrah and Hajj, King Abdullah has not yet approved a proposed ban on elderly, young, and chronically ill pilgrims.

¶2. (SBU) Nine people between the ages of 15 and 33 have died from H1N1 complications in the Kingdom to date. In an August 11 meeting with the A/DCM, Minister of Health Abdullah Al-Rabeeah said Saudi Arabia's 0.7 percent H1N1 mortality rate is comparable to other H1N1-infected countries (septel). Rabeeah noted that the H1N1 cases remain mild and only 16 infected patients are currently hospitalized. Of the 700 H1N1-infected to date, most reportedly have been aged 10 to ¶35.

¶3. (SBU) The Ministry of Health announced August 6 that Hajj visa applicants must provide a doctor's letter confirming they are in good health and have had a flu vaccination before coming to the Kingdom. A total of 500 mobile surveillance machines have been distributed among health officials and prominent community leaders in all parts of the Kingdom, according to MOH spokesman Dr. Khalid Al Mirghalani.
ERDMAN